

David Bell in World Trademark Review: Public Enemy Political Spat Reveals Challenges of Overlapping Brands With Eccentric Public Figures

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PRACTICES Intellectual Property

Haynes Boone Partner [David Bell](#) talked with *World Trademark Review* about a dispute between rappers Flavor Flav and Chuck D that has spoken to the complexities of managing disparate characters and voices within a single brand image.

Here is an excerpt:

The two founding members of the group Public Enemy parted ways over a Twitter spat that hinged on a political disagreement – and provides an important lesson for brand owners.

A public split between the co-founders of a group may seem typical of music industry figures, but it is also counter-intuitive to the efforts put in by branding experts to maintain a cohesive and singular voice.

The duo were booked to perform at a rally for U.S. Democratic Party nominee Bernie Sanders. However, Flavor Flav’s lawyers released a statement that the rapper “has not endorsed any political candidate in this election cycle.” Additionally, the statement noted that Sanders did not have authorisation to use the group’s image without Flav’s permission. “While Chuck is certainly free to express his political views as he sees fit – his voice alone does not speak for Public Enemy.” This sentiment was supplemented by a handwritten note from Flav reading: “Hey Bernie, don’t do this.”

David Bell, a partner at Haynes Boone, tells *WTR*: “This is the latest of many examples over the years of music groups disagreeing on ownership of their brand. This issue also, of course, comes up outside of the music industry. It highlights why thinking through brand ownership, and registering one or more trademarks for the brand, can be enormously important for future business decisions and dealings.”

To read the full article, click [here](#).